

PROPOSED USE OF THE PLENARY POWERS TO SUPPRESS THE
SPECIFIC NAME "MUSICUS" LINNAEUS, 1758, AS PUBLISHED
IN THE COMBINATION "TURDUS MUSICUS" AND TO APPROVE
A NEOTYPE FOR "TURDUS ILIACUS" LINNAEUS, 1758, THE
EURASIAN REDWING (CLASS AVES)

By ERNST MAYR

(Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard College,
Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A.)

and

CHARLES VAURIE

(The American Museum of Natural History, New York)

Plate 3

(Commission Reference : Z.N.(S.) 1135)

The object of the present application is to ask the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature to take such action as is necessary to stabilise the specific name *iliacus* Linnaeus, 1758, as published in the combination *Turdus iliacus*, as the specific name for the Eurasian Redwing and, in addition, to take certain action, supplementary to that taken in *Opinion* 405, for the purpose of securing the position of the name *philomelos* Brehm, 1831, as published in the combination *Turdus philomelos*, as the oldest available name for the Song Thrush. The considerations involved in this case are set out below.

2. The first of the two names which require to be considered is the name *Turdus iliacus* Linnaeus, 1758 (*Syst. Nat.* (ed. 10) 1 : 168, Sp. No. 3), the second being *Turdus musicus* Linnaeus, 1758 (*ibid*, 1 : 169, Sp. No. 4).

3. The name *iliacus* was well-understood in the period before 1758 as a name applying to the Eurasian Redwing and was so employed, for example, by Ray, Klein and Aldrovandri. Unfortunately, the nominal species *Turdus iliacus*, as established by Linnaeus in 1758, was a composite. The diagnostic reference then given by Linnaeus applied to the Song Thrush, while three of the references cited (those to the works of Ray, Klein and Aldrovandi) applied to the Redwing, the fourth (that to Albin) applying to the Mistle-Thrush. This muddle was cleared up by Linnaeus himself in 1766 (*Syst. Nat.* (ed. 12) (1 : 292)

when he re-wrote the diagnosis in such a way as clearly to apply to the Redwing. On this occasion Linnaeus cited also a number of additional references, all of which apply to the Redwing. Apart from the fact that in 1766 Linnaeus still cited Albin's figure of a Mistle Thrush under the name *Turdus iliacus*, his presentation of that nominal species in the 12th Edition of the *Syst. Nat.* is quite homogeneous, the whole of it applying to the Redwing. For the next 143 years this disposition of the name *Turdus iliacus* was followed by all subsequent authors who accepted Linnaeus' action as that of a valid First Reviser.

4. The history of the name *musicus* is in many respects similar to that of *iliacus* described above. In the period prior to 1758 this name was well understood as applying to the Song Thrush, and was so used by Willughby, Ray, Gesner and others. Linnaeus' treatment of this name was examined in detail by one of the present applicants in 1952 (Mayr, *Ibis* 94 : 532—534). In this survey Mayr first examined the treatment by Linnaeus of the name *Turdus musicus* in 1746 in the First Edition of the *Fauna svecica* and showed that on that occasion Linnaeus gave a description which applied to the Song Thrush and cited six bibliographical references, of which four (namely the second, third, fourth and sixth) also apply to the Song Thrush, only the two others (the first and the fifth) applying to the Redwing, which Linnaeus did not then recognise as a separate species. When in 1758 Linnaeus published the name *Turdus musicus* in the Tenth Edition of the *Systema Naturae*, he recognised the Redwing as a species distinct from the Song Thrush, calling the former *Turdus iliacus* (see paragraph 3 above), while retaining the name *Turdus musicus* for the Song Thrush. However, Linnaeus was still confused about these two species, for (as already noted) he gave a diagnosis applicable to the Song Thrush under the name *Turdus iliacus*, although all of the references cited (except one) applied to the Redwing, while under the name *Turdus musicus* he gave a diagnosis applicable to the Redwing and not to the Song Thrush. On the other hand, three of the individual references cited (those to Willughby, Ray and Frisch) apply unequivocally to the Song Thrush, one (the reference to the First Edition of his own *Fauna svec.*) was to a composite which (as shown above) was composed predominantly of the Song Thrush, the last (sixth reference (that to Albin)) alone clearly referring to the Redwing. In the Twelfth Edition of the *Syst. Nat.* (: 292) Linnaeus re-wrote the diagnosis for *Turdus musicus* in such a way as to make it apply clearly to the Song Thrush ; at the same time he omitted the offending reference to Albin and added further references which applied only to the Song Thrush. The action by Linnaeus in this matter was accepted by subsequent authors as a valid First Reviser decision and the name *musicus* was widely applied to the Song Thrush for the whole period during which the name *iliacus* Linnaeus was applied to the Redwing (paragraph 3 above).

5. It was in 1909 that the interpretation of the foregoing names was disturbed when Hartert (1909, *Bull. Brit. Ornith. Club* 23 : 54) switched the

name *musicus* from the Song Thrush to the Redwing on the ground that the description given by Linnaeus for *Turdus musicus* in 1758 applied to the Redwing. Hartert's action in this matter was invalid, for, although his argument regarding the description given by Linnaeus was (as shown in paragraph 4 above) quite correct as far as it went, he overlooked the composite character of this nominal species as established by Linnaeus in 1758 and failed to take account of the valid First Reviser action taken by Linnaeus himself in 1766. The publication of Hartert's paper led to confusion and instability, for, although some authors followed his lead, others refused to switch the name *musicus* in the manner which he claimed was necessary. It is very unfortunate that at this stage no application was made to the International Commission, for much harm might in this way have been avoided. As it was, Hartert's authority was so great that his use of the name *musicus* for the Redwing has been increasingly adopted, notwithstanding the fact that, as shown in paragraph 4 above, it was quite contrary to the *Règles*.

6. At the same time that Hartert deprived the Song Thrush of the name *musicus* Linnaeus by transferring that name to the Redwing, he applied to the Song Thrush the name *philomelos* Brehm, 1831, as published in the combination *Turdus philomelos*. This name gradually came into use for the Song Thrush as acceptance of Hartert's use of the name *musicus* for the Redwing became more general. In 1924 (*Ibis* 66 : 158) an attempt was made by two members of the Committee on Nomenclature of the British Ornithologists' Union to substitute the name *ericetorum* Turton, 1807 (as published in the combination *Turdus ericetorum*) for the name *philomelos* Brehm as the specific name for the Song Thrush. It is not necessary, however, to examine this aspect of the case, for recently, on the recommendation of the Standing Committee on Ornithological Nomenclature established by the Tenth International Ornithological Congress, the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature has suppressed the name *ericetorum* Turton under its Plenary Powers, at the same time placing the name *philomelos* Brehm on the *Official List of Specific Names in Zoology* as the valid name for the Song Thrush (*Opinion* 405).

7. It remains now to consider the action required to settle the still outstanding questions in regard to the names discussed above. As regards the specific name *musicus* Linnaeus, we have shown that it is not properly applicable to the Redwing and cannot be used for that species. We have shown also that it does apply to the Song Thrush but could not be used for that species without a reversal by the Commission of its acceptance of the name *philomelos* Brehm for that species, a course which we do not recommend. In the circumstances the only remaining course is the suppression of the name *musicus* Linnaeus under the Commission's Plenary Powers and this is what we recommend should be done. We have now to consider what name should be applied to the Redwing. As regards this we are strongly in favour of a return to the long-established and well-understood name *iliacus* Linnaeus. We feel confident that this will be welcomed by all those ornithologists who resisted Hartert's

application of the name *musicus* to that species and we do not doubt that the same view will be taken by those ornithologists who followed Hartert's lead, now that the application of the name *musicus* to the Redwing has been shown to be incorrect.

8. The action which we recommend will involve the placing of the name *iliacus* Linnaeus, 1758, on the *Official List of Specific Names in Zoology*. Before this is done, it will be desirable to define more closely than has been done hitherto the way in which this name is to be interpreted. This is necessary for two reasons: (a) because (as shown in paragraph 4 above) there was one alien element left in the nominal species *Turdus iliacus* even after the revision carried out by Linnaeus in 1766, namely the reference to a plate in Albin depicting the Mistle Thrush; (b) because it is important that at the subspecies level the name *iliacus* should continue to apply to the race occurring in Sweden and other parts of Northern Europe. We have given careful consideration to the question whether the identity of the nominal species *Turdus iliacus* Linnaeus, 1758, could be satisfactorily secured by selecting as the lectotype of that species a specimen figured or described in one of the works cited by Linnaeus when he published the above name. We are of the opinion that, while this course would serve to link the name *iliacus* Linnaeus with the Eurasian Redwing, it would not suffice clearly to fix as the nominate subspecies of that species the North European subspecies long accepted as such. We have reached the conclusion that this is a case where the necessary stability in nomenclature can be secured only by the selection of a neotype and the recognition of that neotype in the decision to be given by the Commission on the present application. Clearly, the most desirable arrangement as being most closely in harmony with established practice would be one under which the neotype to be selected was a specimen obtained in Sweden which clearly belongs to the race which has been accepted as the nominate race of this species. It seems to us also that it would be appropriate that the Swedish specimen of this Linnaean species which is to become the neotype should be a specimen preserved in the Rijksmuseum at Stockholm. We therefore approached Count Nils Gyldenstolpe on this subject and he very kindly designated a Swedish example (taken at Kaaslasluspa, Lappland, North Sweden) to be the neotype of this species. We ask that the Commission should recognise this neotype under its Plenary Powers when dealing with the present application, thereby taking as rapidly as possible the action needed to complete the action set out in *Opinion* 405, the *Opinion* in which it accepted the specific name *philomelos* Brehm, 1831, as published in the combination *Turdus philomelos*, to be the specific name for the Song Thrush. The note containing Count Gyldenstolpe's designation of the foregoing neotype is attached to the present application as an Appendix.

9. Since, as has been shown, the Mistle Thrush enters into this case by reason of a plate of that species having been cited by Linnaeus in the synonymy of *Turdus iliacus* it is desirable that, in order that the action to be taken by the

Commission should cover the whole field involved in the present case, the specific name for the Mistle Thrush (*viscivorus* Linnaeus, 1758, *Syst. Nat.* (ed. 10) 1 : 168, as published in the combination *Turdus viscivorus*) should now be placed upon the *Official List of Specific Names in Zoology*.

10. The action which we now ask the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature to take in this case is that it should :—

(1) use its Plenary Powers :—

(a) to suppress the under-mentioned specific name for the purposes of the Law of Priority but not for those of the Law of Homonymy :
musicus Linnaeus, 1758, as published in the combination
Turdus musicus ;

(b) to approve and adopt the neotype for the nominal species *Turdus iliacus* Linnaeus, 1758, designated by Count Nils Gyldenstolpe in the Appendix to the present application ;

(2) place the under-mentioned specific names on the *Official List of Specific Names in Zoology* :—

(a) *iliacus* Linnaeus, 1758, as published in the combination *Turdus iliacus*, as interpreted by the neotype specified in (1)(b) above ;

(b) *viscivorus* Linnaeus, 1758, as published in the combination *Turdus viscivorus* ;

(3) place the under-mentioned specific name on the *Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology* : *musicus* Linnaeus, as published in the combination *Turdus musicus*, as suppressed under the Plenary Powers in (1)(a) above.

APPENDIX

Designation of a Neotype for the nominal species “ *Turdus iliacus* ”
Linnaeus, 1758 (Class Aves)

By Count NILS GYLDENSTOLPE
(*Naturhistoriska Rijksmuseum, Stockholm, Sweden*)

(Plate 3)

The specimen described below is herewith designated to be the neotype for the nominal species *Turdus iliacus* Linnaeus, 1758 (*Syst. Nat.* (ed. 10) 1 : 168).

Description of the Neotype : General coloration above "Light Brownish Olive $\times$ Buffy Olive (Ridgway, 1912, *Col. Stand. and Nomencl.* : pl. xxx); under-wing coverts and sides of the body rusty-red; supercilium cream-coloured; ear-coverts and cheeks light brownish-olive, some of the feathers with narrow whitish stripes; a yellowish-white moustachial stripe present; from the gape along the sides of the throat a number of black spots; underparts of the body white, more or less distinctly washed with rusty-yellowish on the crop region, the latter as well as the breast with broad black longitudinal streaks.

Hardly different from Sharpe's *Turdus coburni* (30th November 1901, *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club* 12 : 28) from Iceland except by somewhat smaller average size, more distinctly blackish longitudinal black striping on upper breast and slightly less brownish upper parts. The Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*) differs from the Song Thrush in having a broad whitish supercilium extending from the base of the bill to above the eyes, a feature which does not occur in the Song Thrush. In addition the Redwing is distinguished by having the sides of the breast rusty-red, a colour which appears to be a little paler than that found in *T. coburni*.

2. Dimensions of Neotype : Wing 117.5 mm.; tail 78 mm.; exposed culmen 18 mm.; bill from gape 24.5 mm.; tarsus 27 mm.

3. Sex of Neotype : Adult male (σ).

4. Locality of Neotype : The specimen here designated as Neotype for the nominal race of *Turdus iliacus* Linnaeus, 1758, was collected at Kaalasluspa, Lappland, North Sweden, about 18 km. south-south-west of Kiruna, 6th June 1955. Collected by H. Sjöqvist.

5. Reference number allotted to the Neotype : The Neotype is kept in the Collections of the Naturhistoriska Rijksmuseum in Stockholm, Sweden. The Museum Reference number is as follows : "Nat. Hist. Rijksmuseum, Stockholm, *Turdus i. iliacus*, Nr. 101". It has been marked "Neotype" on the label.

6. Figure of Neotype : *Bulletin of Zoological Nomenclature* 13 : pl. 3 (3 figs.).

Naturhistoriska Rijksmuseet,
STOCKHOLM,
Sweden.

23rd January 1957